

network address is transmitted by direct communication from the first user equipment to the at least one other user equipment.

[0014] Advantageously, the method provides a technical effect that allows for conferences to be set up on an ad hoc basis so that the conferences need not be prearranged. In addition, the method prevents the problem of overlapping conference sessions. This problem is overcome by providing for a server to allocate a resource for a conference, and a corresponding address for that resource. In this way, an address can be unique to a particular conference at a given time.

[0015] A further advantage of the present invention is that it allows for the use of standard SIP message in the establishment of a conference call. Furthermore, no significant user configuration is required in the allocation of conferencing resources.

[0016] Preferably a user transmits the network address from the first user equipment to one or more other user equipments of other users that will take part in the conference call. Preferably connections are initiated between the first user equipment, the one or more other user equipments, and the network address to establish the conference call.

[0017] According to a second aspect of the present invention, a non-transitory computer readable medium is encoded with instructions for performing a method that, when executed on a computer, comprises: transmitting from a first user equipment to a server a first message comprising a request for a resource configured to sustain a conference call; receiving by the first user equipment from the server a second message comprising a network address identifying the resource configured to sustain the conference call which has been allocated by the server; in response to receiving the second message, transmitting a first request from the first user equipment directly to the resource at the network address; in response to receiving an acknowledgment of the first request directly from the resource, transmitting from the first user equipment to at least one other user equipment a third message comprising the network address; and in response to receiving a notification that the resource sends out directly to the at least one other user equipment an acknowledgment of a second request directly sent from the at least one terminal, the first user equipment initiating a connection from the first user equipment to the at least one other user equipment via the resource to establish a conference call between the first user equipment and the at least one other user equipment; wherein the third message comprising the network address is transmitted by direct communication from the first user equipment to the at least one other user equipment.

[0018] According to a third aspect of the present invention, a user equipment comprises at least one processor and at least one memory including computer program code for one or more programs, the at least one memory and the computer program code being configured, with the at least one processor, to cause the user equipment to perform at least the following: transmitting to a server a first message comprising a request for a resource configured to sustain a conference call; receiving from the server a second message comprising a network address identifying the resource configured to sustain the conference call which has been allocated by the server; in response to receiving the second message, transmitting a first request directly to the resource at the network address; in response to receiving an acknowl-

edgment of the first request directly from the resource, transmitting to at least one other user equipment a third message comprising the network address; and in response to receiving a notification that the resource sends out directly to the at least one other user equipment an acknowledgment of a second request directly sent from the at least one terminal, initiating a connection to the at least one other user equipment via the resource to establish a conference call between the user equipment and the at least one other user equipment; wherein the third message comprising the network address is transmitted by direct communication from the first user equipment to the at least one other user equipment.

[0019] According to a fourth aspect of the present invention, a conference server is provided for administering conferencing resources, the conference server comprising at least one processor and at least one memory including computer program code for one or more programs, the at least one memory and the computer program code being configured, with the at least one processor, to cause the conference server to perform at least the following: receiving from a first user equipment a first message comprising a request for a resource that is configured for sustaining a conference call; allocating a network address identifying a resource that is configured for sustaining the conference call; and transmitting to the first user equipment a second message comprising the network address.

[0020] The server could be provided at a single location, or by functionality that is distributed between two or more locations.

[0021] According to a fifth aspect of the present invention, a communications system is provided comprising: a conference server for administering conferencing resources in a communications system comprising a plurality of terminal, the conference server comprising: a receiver unit for receiving from a first terminal a first message comprising a request for a resource capable of sustaining a conference call; an allocation unit for allocating a network address identifying a resource capable of sustaining the conference call; and a transmission unit for transmitting, to the first terminal a second message comprising the network address; and a plurality of terminals including the first terminal.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0022] The present invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0023] FIG. 1A shows a first prior art model for a conferencing system;

[0024] FIG. 1B shows a second prior art model for a conferencing system;

[0025] FIG. 2 shows a prior art dial-in conferencing system;

[0026] FIG. 3 shows an illustrative conferencing system according to one set of embodiments of the invention;

[0027] FIG. 4 illustrates a flow chart presenting steps for administering conference resources in a communications system;

[0028] FIG. 5 shows the elements of the conference server, according to one set of exemplary embodiment of the invention.